DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 141 450 UD 017 059

AUTHOR Conley, Houston; And Others
TITLE Desegregation Dilemma and Its Impact on the Quality of Life for Black Americans - Year 2000.
PUB DATE [Apr 77]
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS American Culture; Black Colleges; Black Education; Black History; *Blacks; *Black Youth; Caucasians; Futures (of Society); *Higher Education; *Integration Litigation; *Life Style; Research Needs; *School Integration
IDENTIFIERS Griggs v Duke Power Company

ABSTRACT

The black problem in America today involves a moral issue with basic judicial, educational, political, and social overtones. The quality of life for black Americans is intertwined with the issue of race relations. This scholarly review cites events, statistics, articles and specific court cases in an attempt to emphasize the importance of the critical period 1975-2000 for blacks and black colleges. A summary statement by the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education on the impact of desegregation in the lives of black Americans is presented. Various court litigation decisions concerning equal educational opportunity for blacks are reviewed. The enrollment trends of black youth are analyzed. Community and parental reactions to achievement of quality education for their children are cited. Various publications concerning the educational quality and life of blacks and black colleges are mentioned. The need for diverse research studies to provide information concerning the black experience in both black and white colleges is summarized. It is suggested that research is needed to provide data for intelligent policy decisions and innovations which can benefit black Americans from now into the 21st century. (JP)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED141450

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

DESEGREGATION DILEMMA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR BLACK AMERICANS - YEAR 2000

Dr. Houston Conley
Associate Professor
College of Education
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061*

UD017059

As we begin the last quarter of the 20th centure we find that the position of the Black in American society has undergone rapid change in particular in the last two decades. However, neither White nor Black Americans have been willing to face or admit the truth concerning race relations. For over 100 years, White Americans have clung to the illusion that if everyone would just sit still time alone would solve the problems of race in America. This unfortunately has not happened. The Black problem in America today can be viewed as a moral issue with basic judicial, educational, political, and social overtones.

The improvement of the quality of life of the Black American is closely intertwined with the moral issue of race relations. The integration of American schools, elementary, secondary and colleges and universities; the concept of equal opportunity for educational attainment; the enforcement of equal employment and housing laws and other societal changes all have an impact on the determination of the quality of life for all Americans as we approach the dawn of the 21st century.

Several issues are critical to the Black American as he or she prepares for the future. However, none is probably more crucial than the concept of

---

*Researchers: Judith Bailey, Charles Studstill and Carmon White; former Graduate Assistants at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.

equal opportunity for educational attainment. In Brown vs. Board of Education[1] the court described as vital several important functions of education, i.e., education is required in the performance of our most basic responsibilities; is the foundation of good citizenship; and is the principle instrument in awakening a child to cultural values.[2]

With the above importance being placed on the education of American youth, as Americans examine the projected quality of life for Black Americans one of the more critical issues should be the future of Black colleges and universities.

Higher education for Black people commenced approximately 100 years ago when the nation was getting ready to celebrate its Centennial. In the 1970's, many Black colleges are celebrating Centennials, have recently done so or are about to do so. The year 1875, a watershed era for American Black history, was the year that Reconstruction informally came to an end and the beginning of the period of abnegation, for the second time, of the hopes and dreams of Black Americans for full participation in the promises of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Black colleges emerged at this turning point era out of sheer necessity. They plowed along in abject adversity in hostile surroundings. Now, 100 years later, they exist precariously in an era of change and complexity as the legal and political debate continues regarding their future and/or demise. The years 1875 to 1900 were very crucial for the founding of Black colleges and the establishment of some form of higher education for Black people.

---

[1] *Brown vs. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

[2] *Ibid.*

History does not necessarily repeat itself, but the years 1975-2000 are ironically analogous and similar. They are critical years for Black people in this nation because on this go round, the survival of Black colleges and universities is at stake. The loss of these societal institutions to the Black community would be, to say the least, an incalcuable cultural as well as educational loss.

A summary statement published by the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education further illustrates the impact of desegregation on the lives of Black Americans as it interfaces with the need to maintain the historically Black colleges. The Association first states that the historically Black colleges are exemplars of policies and practices, that, if used widely across the country, could move the nation more quickly toward equal opportunity with attainment.* In addition, the policies and patterns of historically Black colleges that support beneficial national policies in student financial aid, institutional support, and minority faculty development should be applied nationally.

Equal attainment, or lack thereof, is reflected in the statistics which indicate that, since the gap was seven percentage points in 1960 and almost thirteen percentage points in 1974 between Whites and Blacks who have completed four or more years of college, there must be not only equal opportunity for Blacks, but also equal attainment and productivity. The gap between Whites and Blacks who have completed four or more years of college has been widening since 1960 and continues to widen into the seventies. According to the social and economic statistics of the U.S. Census, the distribution of Blacks in higher education indicate, they are also falling behind in enrolling in four year institutions.

---

*A more detailed document is available from historically Black colleges and universities.

According to the Association's report, an examination of one measurement of productivity (income level) shows similar results. Contrary to the popular opinion that Blacks have experienced great gains in income, especially during the decade of the 60's, studies show that the ratio of Black income to White income has experienced only a minimal degree of advancement in the past twenty-five years; a quarter of a century. In 1974 it was only four percentage points higher than in 1950. Black income was fifty-four percent of White income in 1950; it was fifty-eight percent in 1974.

Reasons for very slow, even minimal, progress over the past quarter of a century toward increased education attainment and the resultant productivity are imbedded in the societal forces governing the education process. Social issues are permeated with individual and group attitude which frequently serve as forces hindering the improvement of the quality of life for people, especially for the minorities and Blacks of this country.

On January 28, 1975, the Black 'Mississippians' Council filed the case of Ayers vs. Waller against the system of higher education in the state of Mississippi. In *Ayers vs. Waller: Towards a Substantive Definition of Equal Educational Opportunity*, the Black 'Mississippians' Council on Higher Education states that Black education has had to struggle against two dominant attitudes of equal destructiveness on the part of Whites: rank racism and reformed racism. First of all, the Council points out that, besides depriving the Black community of more than a half billion dollars in earning power in 1975, school desegregation in numerous instances has effectively arrested the development of Black leadership capability. Both rank racism and reformed racism are more concerned with the mode of Black education than its quality, since the rank racists prefer to educate Blacks in the absence of Whites and the reformed racists prefer to educate Blacks

in a context distinguished by the presence of Whites. This lawsuit is historical for two reasons. First, it proposes a new and expanded definition of "equal educational opportunity" which seeks to preserve and strengthen the historically Black colleges and universities while at the same time seeking to eliminate historical barriers to full and unrestricted Black access to formerly all-White state-supported institutions of higher learning. Second, Ayers vs. Waller advances a program for the reorganization of the public higher educational system in Mississippi which was formulated by Black people. This represents the first time that a program to enhance Black higher educational opportunities formulated and developed by Black people themselves has been pursued in an affirmative legal action in the federal courts by a Black citizens organization.

The case of Brown vs. Board of Education did not eliminate the impact of racism as a factor in diminishing the quality of Black education because its primary objective was not to bring about quality education for Blacks but to absorb Blacks into historically White educational institutions and systems. "The reformed racists* institutions were naive to think that Blacks would be accepted and properly educated in schools controlled by rank racists.** In 1970, twenty-two percent of the total Black population in the state of Mississippi had less than a fifth grade education, compared to only four percent of the Whites. Only 8.8 percent of the Black population had completed high school compared to 30.7 percent of the Whites. Blacks having completed four years of college were a mere 2.6 percent compared to 11.9 percent of the Whites. One can project that the Mississippi statistics are

---

*reformed racists = aim is to mitigate or eliminate overt racism

**rank racists = extreme and utter racists

representative of the National trend. This concept is reinforced when the data shows that, nationally, only 2.6 percent of all dentists, two percent of all physicians, and two percent of all Ph.D.'s are Black, while approximately twelve percent of the U.S. population is Black.

To sufficiently identify some of the reasons behind the above stated figures, researchers must walk through the educational system from the graduate and professional school level down to the elementary classroom. For it is here, at the elementary, middle, and senior high school level that black children and youth are ending their educational careers. These youth, the future and hope of the improvement of the quality of life, are becoming drop-outs, put-outs or push-outs of the middle class educational system; a system maintained and perpetuated by the reformed racists.

Nationally, statistics available show that black youth make up the large majority of all drop-outs, put-outs or push-outs in today's society. For example, in the school districts of Hillsborough County, Florida; Denver Colorado; and Jefferson County, Kentucky since integration Blacks have received more than fifty percent of all suspensions. With this percent of youth out of school, untrained and unemployed, the community must carefully examine the effects of being out of school and unemployed on the youth, his or her self-concept; the community, its role in sustaining itself and the youth through this period; and the governmental structure, particularly programs designed to help reduce and/or eliminate these problems in the present educational structure.

One example of communities choosing to operate outside of the present structure is the growing trend of development of private academics, specifically in the South. The writer recently participated in a study later published in a bool entitled *The Schools That Fear Built*.

The teachers are ill-prepared, young and with little experience. The school buildings are poorly equipped. The curruculum is limited, libraries are thin, and lunch programs depend on vending machines. Tuition is costly.

These, with some exceptions, are "The New Schools." The segregationist academies in the south that were established by parents following court ordered integration in the public schools. Despite the forces just listed, many white parents view segregationist academies as an alternative to what they see as a moral menace: exposing their children to public school systems served by busing and run without prayers in the classroom.

The *Schools That Fear Built* is a probing and careful look at a movement that deserves attention, because the parents who send their young to these academies are not more dismissable as racists or snobs than are parents who enroll their children in private and parochial schools of the North.

Closely associated with the racial pattern drawn by these educational forces are statistics representative of the employment picture. For example, in 1970, in the state of Mississippi, the total percentage of Blacks among professional and technical workers was less than twenty-three percent compared to slightly over seventy-seven percent for Whites. Blacks employed in sales were less than six percent compared to ninety-four for Whites. Only in the case of laborers did Blacks outnumber Whites; there the figure for Blacks was fifty-seven percent and forty-three percent for Whites.

In addition, in an article which appeared in *Afro-American*, a number of minority losses were cited. According to a report on the state of Black America by the National Urban League, many of the gains Blacks made over the past decade were either wiped out or badly eroded in 1975. One indicator cited was a further decline in middle income families. Also, Black family income was only fifty-eight percent of White family income, and the Black

unemployment rate remained virtually unchanged at 14.1 percent while the unofficial rate was a constant twenty-six percent. Thus, from the beginning of the year, one out of every four Black workers in the nation was unemployed.

Marbury and Conley point out why this is such a perilous time for Blacks. The current Black situation is caught in a web whose entanglement may further ensnare or free Blacks from present day oppressions. At present, the economic security of the majority of Blacks is still an uncertainty as most continue to struggle with the meager means of poverty level income. Joblessness is high among Blacks, a situation which sets the cyclical spiral of violence, terror and threat in motion. Integration has meant in many cases the loss of cultural centers of identity. There is a lack of leadership on all levels of government. Black businesses are failing. Black ghettos and the poor remain with us.

Blake and Marbury see H.E.W., the state governments and their governing boards and educators and citizens directly involved in this issue of desegregation in higher education. On the one hand, H.E.W. has adopted a vacillatory role in its quasi-support of Blacks and its simultaneous endorsement of counter pressures. On the other hand, state governments and their governing boards have developed plans that barely touch specifics of implementation, "especially dollars and cents required to build up Black colleges, to develop retention programs in historically White colleges, to increase financial aid to broaden the pool of Black enrollees."[3] Caught in the middle are educators and citizens whose responsibility is to maintain and expand the present avenues and opportunities in the educational process.

---

[3]Dr. Elias Blake, Jr. and Dr. Carl Marbury, *An Independent Capability Unit on Desegregation in Higher Education*, CRITA, Washington, D.C., 1975, p. 3.

Blake and Marbury see this time as a transitional period for Blacks in higher education. They stress the importance of redefining the issues "so that the Black colleges are not viewed as the only remaining vestiges of segregation . . . "[4] William Sims forsees the demise of the Black college, which in essence means the demise of a strong cultural identity for Blacks. In his article in the *Journal of Negro Education*, he quotes R.S. Browne's position on desegregation:

> It was the Black masses who first perceived that integration actually increases the White community's control over the Black one by destroying Black institutions, absorbing Black leadership and making its interests coincide with those of the White community. The international 'brain drain' has its counterpart in the Black community, which is constantly being denuded of its best trained people and many of its national leaders. Black institutions of all sorts--colleges, newspapers, banks, even community organizations--are all losing their better people to the newly available openings of White establishments. This lowers the quality of the Negro organization and in some cases causes their demise or increases their dependence on Whites for survival. Such injurious, if unintended, side effects of integration have been felt in almost every layer of the Black community[5]

Browne supports Marbury and Conley's interpretation of the quality of life for Blacks. They discuss integration as disintegration and explain the trend toward anti-integration among Blacks as not a disregard for White values but an attempt toward re-defining and appreciating themselves as a cultural entity.

---

[4]Dr. Elias Blake, Jr. and Dr. Carl Marbury, *An Independent Capability Unit on Desegregation in Higher Education*, CRITA, Washington, D.C., 1975, p.3.

[5]William E. Sims, "Guest Editorial: Black Colleges-Bicentennial Offers Little Hope," *Journal of Negro Education*, V45, N3, Summer 1976, pp. 222-223.

An article in a 1972 issue of the *Montgomery Advertiser* questions the logic of the NAACP, implying an ambivalence in its stance on the integration-segregation issue in higher education. It envisions conflict in NAACP's simultaneous support of the enforcement of integration and the support of adjacent Black colleges remaining open and not merging with nearby White institutions.

Clearly, the goal of desegregation must build on the strengths already existing in college communities. To focus on Black colleges--those institutions producing the vast majority of Black graduates--as the principal antagonists in this issue of desegregation implies a faulty perception of what needs to be achieved in desegregation. The main issue that needs to be addressed is the expansion of opportunities for Blacks in higher education as well as the provision of quality education.

> The problem is a lack of accurate sources of information with distillations and analyses that support the perspectives of Blacks' pressures for their own advancement. The problem is a lack of expert assistance for institutions in putting forward alternatives to less than satisfactory plans and programs of the states. The problem is a lack of timely short-term studies to clarify what kinds of decisions ought to be made that are most supportive of the long term interests of Blacks. The problem is no source of staff development or short-term education for specific groups such as board members or faculty leadership or lay leadership that has a minority group perspective.
>
> Plans are being put forward with which almost all minority interests disagree. Decisions on major issues, such as admissions, are being made or worked up that can be destructive. Board members with Black interests as their primary interest are floundering in the complexities of the issues and must depend on equally beleaguered educators to educate them instantly while decisions are being made.[5]

---

[5]Dr. Elias Blake, Jr. and Dr. Carl Marbury, *An Independent Capability Unit on Desegregation in Higher Education*, CRITA, Washington, D.C., 1975, p. 4.

Clearly, the need for research is critical. The quality of life for Blacks is at stake. Decisions must be made for the best interests of those directly involved. As Marbury and Conley stress, the years 1975 through 2000 are critical times for Blacks and Black colleges. To lose such institutions would be a cultural and educational catastrophe. Research is needed to provide information concerning the Black experience in both Black and White colleges--how such experiences can involve increasing numbers of Blacks and simultaneously provide the quality of life necessary for Blacks.

Research is needed in defining how the admission process works for both the Black and White population in all institutions of higher learning. Data needs to be collected, analyzed and be available as a measure of predicting the educational progress of Black students and faculty. Such data would provide information concerning potential students and faculty members, socio-economic background, educational advantages and/or disadvantages. It would enable the construction of a general model of equity and provide answers to such questions as: What is the current flow and the future flow of Black students and faculty? What are the potential recruiting levels among new and existing faculty and new bachelor degree graduates? Are the current efforts of recruiting, retaining and advancing Black staff members "merely a backwater ritual designed to appease rather than satisfy Blacks, government agencies, and other constituencies?"[6]

Differential admissions as a direct response to the imperfections of the pre-college system is an area in need of research. The legal and moral issues are many and complex. The question arises as to the legal responsibility of

---

[6]Dr. Elias Blake, Jr. and Dr. Carl Marbury, *An Independent Capability Unit on Desegregation in Higher Education*, CRITA, Washington, D.C., 1975, p. 6.

colleges to compensate for the unfinished or unequal treatment of Black youth who need help. It is true as F Askin states that, "Too much works against the minority applicant: the general cultural and educational retardation of the minority community, which is the result of hundreds of years of racial oppression; the inferior schools in most of the racial ghettos; the cultural bias in traditional testing mechanisms . . ."[7] or is Boyd's study of Black students in predominantly White colleges a more realistic appraisal of the Black experience? His data indicates that special considerations of Black students often lowered the standards of quality of their education which only "provoked negative or ambivalent reactions." Such questions can better be answered with solid data-based research.

If Blacks are to ever realize an equalized enrollment or an equalized faculty development, research estimating financial needs must be done. Money is an important factor in deciding whether Blacks complete their education or even attempt such an education. When uncertainties exist concerning the source of aid or the supply of money, academic performance is hindered if even begun. According to Boyd's findings, sixty-eight percent of Black students rely on grants of loans as their primary source of incoming funds, while seventy-three percent work at one or more jobs to realize their educational aspirations. There is a need for research in this area because a sustained investment in training Black professionals is long overdue.

---

[7]Frank Askin, "Eliminating Racial Inequality in a Racist World," *Civil Liberties Review*, V2, N2, Spring 1975, p. 100.

There is also a need to examine counseling and the advisement of Black students during their educational program. Too often Blacks are not given special consideration when it comes to such needs. Marbury and Conley stress the need to account for the historical background of the Black during the counseling process. Counseling may also help expose the Black student to unfamiliar educational and career options.

Research in the area of social needs is important as well. Boyd's data indicated the need for minor institutional adjustments--such as special entertainment or cultural budgets. Such additions would help ease the adjustment of Black students to college life, both social and academic spheres of it.

In summary, research is essential in refining issues of importance to Blacks as they attempt to redefine and increase appreciation of themselves as a cultural entity and specifically as this attempt is funneled through Black institutions of higher learning.

If the quality of life is to be improved in the 21st century, the following research concerns have implications for Black institutions of higher learning, and Black society in particular:

1. Closer scrutiny should be given the assumption that White schools are necessarily superior to predominately Black schools.

2. More research should be done to analyze the process of social adjustment to determine what specific skills are needed as individuals move from a segregated situation to an integrated one.

3. There must be greater communication between historically Black colleges and the federal government.

4. Special strengths of historically Black colleges must be publicized.

5. Additional graduate programs must be integrated in historically Black colleges and existing graduate programs strengthened through additional fiscal support.

6. A regional and national consortium of Black colleges needs exploration.

7. We talk a great deal about competency tests these days. Ten states have already enacted laws requiring students to have certain "survival skills" in mathematics, reading, and writing before they can receive a diploma, and moves are underway in fifteen states to implement similar plans.

Some people are viewing the competency tests seen as taking away jobs from minorities. In West Palm Beach, Florida, where tests developed at the University of Texas are given, only eight percent of White students flunked, while fifty-six percent of minorities failed.

Under most competency-based education plans, "Attendence Certificates" are given those who finish school but can't pass the tests. But many companies won't hire students without the competency diploma, regardless of whether the job applicant can perform the work. According to *Griggs vs. Duke Power*, standardized tests cannot be used as a criteria for employment unless it can be demonstrated that all items on the test are job related. Therefore, the competency attendence diploma, used to restrict employment, may be inconsistent with the *Griggs vs. Duke Power* decision. As you well know, without a job the "quality of life" is greatly affected. The "real hot potato", according to Dr. Gordon Camelit, Executive Director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, is competency-based graduation and promotion system being considered throughout the country.

I believe it is important for schools to teach such things as balancing checkbooks, filling out job application forms and other things dealt with in competency tests, but I also believe that "coping skills" that can't be evaluated as easily on a paper and pencil test are just as valid.

Basic skills in math, reading, and writing should continue to be emphasized, but the humanities and the cultural side of education should not be neglected in the process.

The real danger of this, as I view it, is that it is a simplistic approach to a very complex problem. The "guts" of it is that some youngsters are going to be held back--and you know which youngsters--and study after study has proven that retention doesn't do any good.

If the quality of life of Black Americans is to be greatly enhanced, research is an imperative tool for providing data upon which intelligent decisions can be made. Research just may be the key for innovation in the Black community.

> It is time for innovation within the total Black community--innovation which is immediate, widespread, and long range. The innovation we are speaking about in simple terms must be imaginative, grass roots and down to earth--based upon the very best thinking, planning and action. The existential alienation and 'madness' of life is likely to wreak havoc upon the Black American Community unless some well thought out and innovative efforts are made by Black people themselves to control the situation before it gets out of hand.[8]

A commitment to such innovation is the only hope for enhancing the quality of life for Black Americans in this country.

---

[8]Carl H. Marbury and Houston Conley, *The Bicentennial as a 'Kairotic' Opportunity to Improve Counseling by Understanding the Black Child from a Historical Prospect*, unpublished paper, pp. 6-7.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Askin, Frank, "Eliminating Racial Inequality in a Racist World," *Civil Liberties Review*, V2, N2, Spring 1975, pp. 96-103.

Blake, Elias Jr. and Marbury, Carl, *An Independent Capability Unit on Desegregation in Higher Education*, CRITA, Washington, D.C., 1975.

Boyd, William II, *Desegregating America's Colleges: A Nationwide Survey of Black Students, 1972-73*, Praeger Publishers, N.Y., 1974.

Marbury, Carl H. and Conley, Houston, *The Bicentennial as a 'Kairotic' Opportunity to Improve Counseling by Understanding the Black Child from a Historical Prospect*, unpublished paper.

Nevin, David and Bills, Robert E., *The Schools That Fear Built*, Acropolis Books Ltd., Washington, D.C., 1976.

"Problems for Black Colleges," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, December, 1972.

Sims, William E., "Guest Editorial: Black Colleges - Bicentennial Offers Little Hope," *Journal of Negro Education*, V45, N3, Summer, 1976, pp. 221-224.

Sowell, Thomas, *Black Education: Myths and Tragedies*, David McKay Company, Inc., N.Y., 1972.